



Voices of Experience

**His abuse has and  
continues to harm my  
children**

**INSIGHT EXCHANGE**

**DEAR READER,**

The **Voices of experience** are de-identified descriptions of people's lived experience of domestic, family and sexualised violence and other adversities. They have been developed by the author, assembled with Insight Exchange and are designed to affirm agency, uphold dignity and support safety.

The insights reveal the ways in which the person has resisted and responded to the violence used against them. The descriptions reveal some of the context in which the violence has occurred, how people, services and systems responded and how these responses were helpful, unhelpful or harmful.

**Our thanks to every person who contributed insights for the benefit of many.**

We acknowledge that despite our best efforts to listen to lived experiences of violence and abuse, we can never fully understand all that a person's experiences mean to them now or through their life. We understand that lived and living experiences can never be fully represented in language or any other form.

**THANKS**

## **His abuse has and continues to harm my children.**

My eldest child was present during each and every violent and abusive outburst. It was daily and around the clock from when she was born. She was awakened regularly by terrifying shouting and threats day and night. Her father would demand I drive him to the airport at 4am to take a work flight instead of him taking a taxi. He would wake me and start yelling at me saying I wasn't interested in him and didn't care.

He would respond with terrifying anger and abuse when I politely asked him to change the baby's nappy in the middle of the night when I was injured and couldn't walk. He became even more abusive when I started co-sleeping so that I could change and feed her without walking. He would accuse me of depriving him of his sleep.

He would turn on the bedroom light and abuse me in the middle of the night for falling asleep and not answering his text message; accusing me of sleeping with the tradesman as the reason for not wanting to have sex with him. We were terrified of him.

Initially my child would scream and cry as she was terrified. Then she stopped crying and stopped responding altogether. She started missing milestones. She didn't wave.

She didn't cuddle toys. She didn't eat. She clung to me and was terrified to go to anyone else. If I laid her on her on her tummy for 'tummy time' she would lay there, face down, not moving and couldn't lift her head or arms. She began refusing food and water. Her father would often come home when I was trying to feed her solids and would yell abuse at us, standing over me and my daughter in her high chair.

Fortunately I was still breastfeeding her when she stopped eating, but I would have to syringe water into her mouth. It was a success if she ate 2 spoons of avocado. She fell from the 50th percentile in body weight to the 5th percentile.

He was unpredictable. I never knew when he would get home and when he would abuse me. He would say he would be home in 15 minutes and return home 3 hours later and would be livid as I had eaten dinner and hadn't waited for him.

She would shut down altogether on a regular basis; I would find her lying on the floor; conscious; her eyes open but she would not respond. Her body would be tense and she would be rigid with fear. It would take me hours to cuddle her and bring her back to being ok and in a lucid state. Following this she would not eat and would wake every hour or so during the night crying out and shaking.

My daughter had panic attacks regularly during the night, screaming “No Daddy No”. She would wake in the night screaming, “I can’t breathe Mummy, there’s something on my chest”. When she was however, she told me that she didn’t want to be alive anymore.

I gave her a healthy, sugar free diet and she was solely breastfed. In spite of this my daughter’s teeth eroded and 19 of her 20 teeth had to be capped and crowned with silver teeth to preserve them. This was the result of her not eating and drinking.

She still does not eat enough to satisfy her energy requirements. She is on supplements and I still have to assist her to eat. She suffers from chronic constipation, she did not toilet train until she was 5 as she couldn’t feel when she needed to go to the toilet.

She suffers from terrible fear and anxiety in the bathroom. This was where much of the abuse occurred. The echo made it more terrifying for her. The bathroom can still make her feel terrified. When she is anxious or worried she becomes incontinent. She still wears a nappy at night. Her growth is still below where it should be despite having improved immeasurably. She has returned to the 50% percentile for body weight for girls her age; however she is short for her age. I am tall in the 90th percentile; her abusive father is of similar statistics.

My second daughter is experiencing 'behavioural issues', the paediatrician and OT suspect it may have been harm caused by his verbal and psychological abuse I suffered during my pregnancy with her. She has no off switch. She can become anxious, and she becomes extremely upset when she separates from me. If a man shouts this makes her acutely anxious. At the same time she can have no fear and does not assess 'risks' in an age appropriate way.

My eldest daughter still suffers from anxiety and panic attacks. They are paralysing for her, though it is happening less often for her. She often does not recognise hunger and the need to go to the bathroom which makes her incontinent. Doctors often comment on her appearance as she appears 'growth retarded'. She has come a long way but her responses to his violence are is still just beneath the surface.

This text is an excerpt from

Sally | Voices of Insight

[www.insightexchange.net/voices-of-insight](http://www.insightexchange.net/voices-of-insight)

“...The threats from his systematic brutalisation of all aspects of our lives were not just threats to my safety and to the kid’s safety but equally threats to our liberty. The vast majority of responses we have had from service providers and from family and friends were from people who did not understand Domestic Violence. Their responses often minimised the violence.

I needed and still need the support of the system but the system has continually failed to adequately respond and support me. This has left me with the burden of responsibility to maintain our safety, wellbeing and liberty in the face of his continuing escalation of violence.

My fear is that he will hurt or kill me or the kids. He’s still around.”

## **My Safety Kit**

'[My Safety Kit](#)' is a reflection resource designed to support people who are, or may be, experiencing domestic, family and sexualised violence.



[www.insightexchange.net/my-safety-kit/](http://www.insightexchange.net/my-safety-kit/)

## **Follow My Lead**

'[Follow My Lead](#)' is a resource designed to build on the understanding of people responding to control, abuse and violence.



[www.insightexchange.net/follow-my-lead/](http://www.insightexchange.net/follow-my-lead/)



## INSIGHT EXCHANGE

**[www.insightexchange.net](http://www.insightexchange.net)**

Insight Exchange centres lived expertise of domestic, family and sexualised violence. It is designed to inform and strengthen social, service and system responses to violence and abuse.

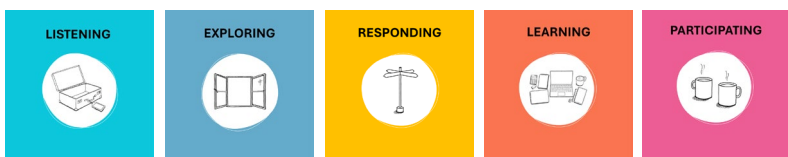
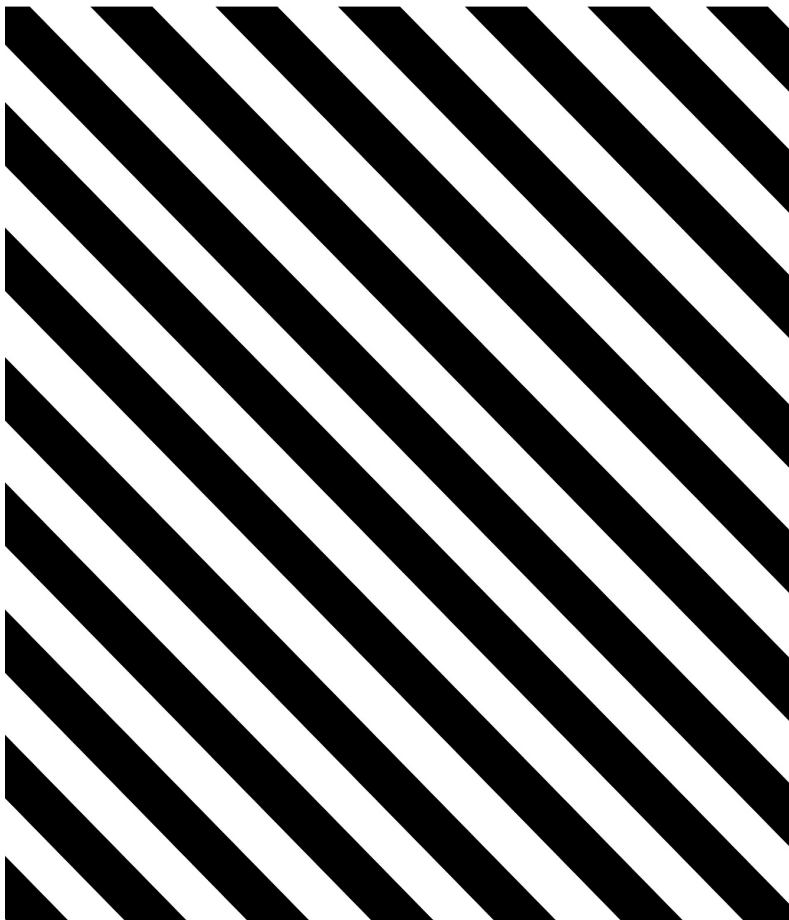
Insight Exchange provides free (donated) information, insights and reflection materials to people in any community, service or system.

Read more about using Insight Exchange:  
[www.insightexchange.net/guide-using/](http://www.insightexchange.net/guide-using/)

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Insight Exchange acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our work and services operate and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We extend this respect to all First Nations peoples across the country and the world. We acknowledge that sovereignty of this land was never ceded. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.



The menus in the Insight Exchange website include listening, exploring, responding, learning and participating.

## INSIGHT EXCHANGE

Scan the static QR code to explore

[www.insightexchange.net](http://www.insightexchange.net)

(website has a quick-exit button)

